
THE POCAHONTAS TIMES

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CALVIN W. PRICE, EDITOR.

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The battle of Elkwater was the Civil War battle that was never fought. There was some slaughter but both sides drew back without going on with the great conflict that was staged. Both sides were on the defensive. The federal forces were dug in in Tygarts Valley, Randolph county, below the mouth of the considerable creek called Elkwater, for the purpose of holding the confederates from marching into the northwestern part of West Virginia, and the confederates were entrenched on Middle Mountain to hold the federal army from marching through Marlinton, Huntersville, and Warm Springs, and taking possession of the Virginia Central Railroad at Millboro. That is the reason that both armies were content to face each

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Robert E. Lee to the end of the war shone more as a defensive strategist than he did in his offensive movements. In this he was the antithesis of Stonewall Jackson who came down on them like a wolf in the fold. Note Lee's failure in the Gettysburg campaign.

The federal forces were flushed with the victories of Philippi, Rich Mountain and Carrick's Ford. McClellan had won these and it made him commander in chief, so he went to Washington to take charge of the far flung battlelines, and left General Reynolds to make a fortified camp at Elkwater, while General Rosecrans

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Mountain and Carrick's Ford. McClellan had won these and it made him commander in chief, so he went to Washington to take charge of the far flung battlelines, and left General Reynolds to make a fortified camp at Elkwater, while General Rosecrans marched on to Kanawha.

The road from Marlinton to Elkwater, now called the Seneca Trail is almost due north and south. From Marlinton it is more or less up hill for seven miles until it tops Elk Mountain. Then it descends a short distance to the upper waters of Elk River and follows the Old Field Fork down for about nine miles to the forks, crossing Slaty Fork near its mouth, there to the Big Spring of Elk Fork. The pike follows this stream. to the postoffice Linwood, four miles, and then continues north ascending Middle Mountain two miles, then across a head of a hollow about a mile to the top of Valley Mountain, the line between Randolph County and Pocahontas County, and thence about ten miles to the Elkwater fort. It was an important pike at the beginning at the Civil War, being one of the Commonwealth's highways, under the internal improvement schemes that Virginia had engaged in so heavily for thirty-odd years

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It was an important pike at the beginning at the Civil War, being one of the Commonwealth's highways, under the internal improvement schemes that Virginia had engaged in so heavily for thirty-odd years immediately prior to the war.

The country is, and was at that time nearly all cleared and the road lined with fine farms between Marlinton and Elkwater.

The union army had won signal victories in Randolph and Tucker counties July 11, 12, and 13, 1861, and the news had just time to spread over the nation for a general rejoicing, when on July 21st, the confederates won a big battle at Bull Run and convinced the north that there was serious trouble ahead.

McClelland was ordered to leave some one in command in the mountains and get the war going again.

He arranged to hold the confederates back. The immense size of the ditch and bank at Elkwater is still to be noticed. So it is not surprising to find an order to the effect that this was to be an extra big barrier, as well as the one on Cheat mountain. That is evidence enough that the

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Keynolds made the fort at Elkwater, and Kimball of the Fourteenth Indiana regiment, made the one at Cheat Summit generally referred to as White Top, where a man by the name of White lived. The Cheat Summit camp was on the Staunton & Parkersburg turnpike and this road ran south east from Huttons-

Reynolds made the fort at Elkwater, and Kimball of the Fourteenth Indiana regiment, made the one at Cheat Summit generally referred to as White Top, where a man by the name of White lived. The Cheat Summit camp was on the Staunton & Parkersburg turnpike and this road ran south east from Huttonsville, gradually leaving the pike from that place to Marlinton. Cheat Summit is almost due east from Elkwater where the camp was and a trail led down the mountain making a short cut seven miles long between the two places. The wagon roads around by Huttonsville between the camps covered a distance of eighteen miles.

These camps were formed on or about the 13th or 14th of July. The first troops of the confederates to arrive at Middle Mountain were the Bath Cavalry on July 28th, followed by Col. Stephen Lee, with the Sixth North Carolina regiment. The plan of fortifying Valley Mountain and Middle Mountain was the result of a report made by William Skeen, an attorney of Huntersville, who furnished a map of the country, and

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In the meantime troops had been pouring into Staunton from all over the south and had been routed by way of Monterey on the Staunton and Parkersburg pike. The information furnished by Skeen was seized upon immediately by Robert E. Lee at Richmond, and he had a good deal of trouble getting the officers at Staunton to cease to send troops by Monterey and to detrain them at Millboro. His present

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terey, Bartow, Huntersville, and Marlinton, were called the Northwestern Army, and General Loring was placed in command of this army by an order from General Lee dated July 20th. This was the officer who had outranked Robert E. Lee but who took his orders from Lee. But it was not long until Lee himself came to the mountains and took over the command. He arrived at Valley Mountain August 8th, and from that time to September 14th, that was Headquarters of the Forces, that title traveling with Lee from Richmond to the Big Spring.

Here is a list of the headquarters in West Virginia during the wet summer of 1861. Lee was at Valley Mountain from August 8 to August 15; at Meadow Bluff on September 24; and at Sewell Mountain, on October 20. During 1861, all of Robert E. Lee's activities in camp were confined to West Virginia, the rest of the time being spent at Richmond.

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At Clarksburg was another West
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federal side. John S. Carlile on Au-
gust 15, 1861, wrote to Simeon Cam-
eron, secretary of war, for God's
sake to send more troops and a gen-
eral to command them or they would
be whipped in ten days. That four
confederate armies were marching
on the northwest by Mingo Flats,
and that the Mingo Flats road was
not guarded. Here was the original
Godsaker about whom we heard so
much about in the World War. He
was mistaken about the Mingo Flats
road not being guarded for the Elk-
water fort was there for that very
purpose.

And about this time another de-
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a bushwhacker. By a letter dated

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July 19, 1861, General H. R. Jackson
wrote to headquarters that he had
recruited home guards to the number
of one hundred and eighty men, and
that as all of them had corn to work,
he had agreed that if they left eighty
of their best riflemen that the rest
might return to their crops. These
eighty riflemen were familiar with
the country and were to "annoy the
enemy from the hills and bushes."

So the mountain armies filled the
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So the mountain armies filled the passes and watched each other during the weeks of August and the first part of September. In the federal camp at Elkwater were two companies from Indiana who were in gray uniform and these men mingled with the confederates in their big camp at Valley Mountain. On Sunday the 8th of September a scouting party got as far as Mingo from the Elkwater and had a skirmish at four o'clock in the morning of the 9th in which they reported having killed fifteen secessionists and wounded as many more. And they learned that a general advance was to take place that day and they fell back with the news. And it is now seen that Lee made a general order to advance dated September 9.

A few weeks ago, I had a chapter on the way the confederate forces got

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A few weeks ago, I had a chapter on the way the confederate forces got lost in the Cheat River jungles about Cheat Bridge and thereby prevented Lee from having a pitched battle at Elkwater. These troops were from the army at Bartow and they were to pass through the laurel and the hobblerod in the night time to the south of the camp at Cheat Summit and that after much suffering and many hardships they came straggling back, defeated, weary and discouraged. In studying the evidence that is left of the Elkwater affair, I have found out something more about that lost legion. They attempted to go through the wilderness on the night of the 11th of September. None of the pickets or sentinels of the federal camp on the mountain knew that any such movement was taking place.

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This is conclusive that they did not
top the mountain on the pike. And
early in the morning there were parts
of three regiments which had passed
by the camp and gotten to the pike
in the rear, for early that morning,
the 12th, three army wagons started
from Cheat Summit for supplies, and
they rolled into the confederate army
about a mile west of the encampment
and were captured. The number of
confederate soldiers on the pike west
and in the rear of the confederates
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From this time on the skirmishing in the big forests of Cheat assumed the character of Indian fighting. Later in the day a company of Indiana troops caught sight of some confederates four miles west of the camp at the summit and had a battle with them, the federal troops remaining in the road and the confederates disappearing in the timber.

It now appears that these Indiana troops had been camped in the dense spruce for full two months and the active young soldiers had nothing better to do than to become thoroughly acquainted with the wonders of such a wilderness. Few of them had ever seen a mountain or a forest of any great extent before. They had

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place which was a small camp and
Supply point known as Cheat Moun-
tain Pass ten miles west of the sum-
mit at the northern base of Cheat
Mountain, and the skirmish in the
afternoon of the 12th, interfered
with this movement.

On the 12th the big army on Val-
ley Mountain moved forward. About
half way between the Valley Moun-
tain camp and Elkwater fort, is the
town of Valley Head. This is the
point that the Webster county road,
the Point Mountain pike, joins the
Seneca Trail and the federal forces
had been maintaining an advance
guard at that point.

The confederate army at this point
was about nine thousand strong, and
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The confederate army at this point was about nine thousand strong, and after a battle at the forks of the road at Valley Head, the federals fell back and the confederates did not advance. Along the road which follows the river bottom the land was cleared, but between that strip of settled country and the great Cheat Mountain there is a great stretch of broken wooded country through which many streams flow down from Cheat mountain to the Valley River. Some of these are small runs and others are considerable creeks. At Valley Head, Lee sent three regiments north along the base of Cheat mountain through the woods to join the flanking army that was to cross from Bartow. These regiments marched all day and came to the Staunton & Parkersburg pike to the west of the Summit and cut the telegraph wire between the two federal camps. And effected a junction with part of the Bartow troops.

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As a matter of fact, it would appear that the confederates had about fifty-five hundred men in the woods around Cheat Summit and that they were literally scattered all over a rugged country like a band of sheep that had lost their shepherd. It was the second night in bad weather and there was no way to form a cohesive force out of them. In the meantime those Indiana boys who had been loafing there all summer and probably knew every trout up there by its given name, were ready to harry the strangers out of there, and at break

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Learning that a whip chase was underway to the west and that the confederates were working out towards the Greenbrier River, with the Indiana boys driving them, the commander at the Summit sent some companies of soldiers east over the pike and had them line Cheat River

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confederates were working out towards the Greenbrier River, with the Indiana boys driving them, the commander at the Summit sent some companies of soldiers east over the pike and had them line Cheat River above the bridge, and a battle was fought on that river about two miles above that bridge at a point near where the Cheat Mountain Clubhouse now stands.

The confederate reports are missing as to this encounter, but the federal reports are very positive. They are sure that all the regiments, both from Valley Mountain and from Camp Bartow had been rounded up and were being driven toward the Greenbrier, and that when they were stopped by three hundred men at some point on the river near the clubhouse, that the confederates numbered fifty-five hundred men. These men were driven back into the wilderness and it was not until about ten o'clock that night that they got

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back to Camp Bartow. Kimball says that the result of the panic in the confederate ranks was that the woods were literally covered with the baggage, coats, haversacks, and other articles abandoned by the enemy.

Not if this is true, it is not to be wondered that Lee looked in vain for his proud regiments to come stepping up the broad fields of Tygart's Valley, with flags flying, and drums beating, to take the federals in the rear, while he marched his victorious legions down the valley to storm the federal works and take West Virginia into the confederacy.

It is no wonder that Col. John A. Washington rode down by the mouth of Elkwater with a squad of men, to get around the bend so that he could see the confederate columns advancing up the river to support the attack. And that not seeing such an army that he should have ventured nearer and nearer the fortification so that he could make a thorough search, until so close that he was shot and killed.

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Col. Rust was ordered out of Cheat mountain with his command to get to Bartow as soon as he could and send a dispatch to General Loring by the "near way", Loring was no doubt that day at Valley Mountain. "Get Mr. Arbogast to take the dispatch, if possible." Probably J. H. Arbogast, whose plantation was on the site of the town of Durbin. He is described as the postmaster.

In the meantime on Friday, the Thirteenth, Lee's army edged down the stream from Valley Head, to a point as low down as the mouth of Elkwater, some miles above the Elk-

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In the meantime on Friday, the
Thirteenth, Lee's army edged down
the stream from Valley Head, to a
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Elkwater some miles above the Elk-
water fort. They did not give battle,
waiting no doubt for the flanking
army that never came, but the feder-
als had a rifled gun that shot a ten
pound ball that they ran out about
three quarters of a mile, and fired a
few rounds at the confederates who
withdrew a short distance. That
confederate army lay about the
mouth of Elkwater creek all day on
the 13th, and on the 14th they were
still there. Reynolds said that on
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was another confederate army on top
of Cheat on the pike that was driven
back.

Anyway in the afternoon of the
14th the confederates went back to
their camp on Valley Mountain and
Middle Mountain. So Lee's orders
to advance dated September 9, 1886,
were in force until September 14,
when Lee called them back and said
goodby.

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rent 104 acres of land